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ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

Philadelphia County Medical Society.

DELIVERED

JANUARY 30, 1861.

BY

ISAAC REMINGTON, M.D.

AT THE CLOSE OF HIS OFFICIAL TERM AS PRESIDENT.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:
COLLINS, PRINTER, 705 JAYNE STREET.
1861.

ADDRESS.

FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE PHILADELPHIA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY:—

WE have met this evening to commemorate the 12th Anniversary of our beloved Society, and in compliance with a requisition of the Constitution, I now venture to address you.

Permit me to tender you my thanks for the uniform kindness and indulgence evinced while performing the duties that have devolved upon the chair. In the closing exercises of my term, as your presiding Officer, I sincerely congratulate you on our highly prosperous condition, and although we have suffered from loss of members by death, resignation, and *secession*, during the past two years, I am happy to say their places have been supplied by new members of talent, industry, and promise, who having entered upon a professional career of honor and usefulness, we indulge the expectation of witnessing our science enriched and improved through their valuable contributions.

I am also happy to add that a uniform spirit of condescension, courtesy, and harmony has pervaded our gatherings, and feelings of the deepest interest and satisfaction have been frequently manifested during the discussions that have ensued upon the reading of papers; many of which were prepared with much care, labor, and research. And for which liberal offerings to science and literature, the Society is greatly indebted to the efficient and untiring exertions of its Business Committee.

When we consider the present unsettled state of the medical profession in this country; the low estimate in which it is held by the public; the obloquy and reproach brought upon it by the conduct of unworthy members; the immense numbers in its

ranks, pursuing it merely as a trade or as an art independent of any intellectual or moral endowments; its overcrowded state from the continued accession of new members, many of whom are but imperfectly acquainted with the difficulties and high responsibilities they are about to assume—it appeared that we could not better occupy your time than to endeavor to portray, however feebly, an outline of *professional character*, its *duties*, and its *qualifications*.

Such an inquiry can scarcely fail to kindle in our breasts a more ardent attachment for our profession; an increased desire to improve and extend its resources; and still further to awaken to renewed incitement in the performance of duties, however, irksome and laborious, under the pleasing reflection that our time and our talents have been devoted to the best interests of suffering humanity.

Prior to entering upon the consideration of our principal topic, we design to notice in a cursory way, certain evil habits that operate powerfully, as we conceive, to disturb the equilibrium of the “*mens sana in corpore sano*”—to enfeeble, demoralize, and corrupt the present race of man; and as a necessary sequel bringing in their train an unrestrained indulgence in every species of vice and profligacy; in which debasing habits we feel constrained to include individuals attached to our brotherhood, of acknowledged talents and abilities, thereby suffering greatly in their moral character and professional standing, and not unfrequently followed by a total loss of their influence and position in social life.

We allude to the increased use and wide-spread prevalence of *alcohol* and *tobacco*, twin demons of destruction, intimately fraternized and capable of exercising a fascinating, resistless influence over the thoughtless and unwary; who by listening to the fairy tempter and yielding body, soul, and spirit to the spells of enchantment artfully thrown around them, become overpowered and fall an easy prey; the enslaved victims of a cruel and remorseless enemy.

If, peradventure, we have occasion to inveigh against these national sins, we cherish the hope we shall be forgiven, while pleading the cause of truth and humanity, and contributing our small share in the good work of reformation. We desire rather to point out defects in our social system, to speak a word of caution and advice, than to discover excellencies and to offer pleas in ex-

tenuation of wrong; and thus by directing your attention to the correction of existing evils and abuses, to endeavor to elevate the standard of our profession in virtue, knowledge and usefulness.

Charles Lamb, the Essayist, gives us his sad experience in the following pathetic language:—

“The waters have gone over me. But out of the black depths could I be heard, I would cry out to all those who have set a foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth to whom the flavor of the first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life, or the entering upon some newly discovered paradise, look into my desolation and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is, when he shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will; to see his destruction, and have no power to stop it, and yet feel it all the way emanating from himself; to see all godliness emptied out of him, and yet not be able to forget a time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own ruin; could he see my fevered eye, feverish with the last night's drinking, and feverishly looking for to-night's repetition of the folly; could he but feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebler outcry to be delivered, it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth, in all the pride of its mantling temptation.”

Fermented drinks when received into the stomach produce effects far less injurious than those of the alcoholic class. They first exhilarate, stimulate and exalt the physical and mental powers, and may even augment the appetite and impart tone to the digestive function; but when carried to excess and too long indulged in, invariably stupefy, brutalize, narcotize and destroy life.

The passion for indulgence in intoxicating drinks when once acquired, by habit becomes irresistible, though at first offensive and revolting to the taste, and the poor inebriate given up to his own insatiate cravings, is doomed to a life of endless misery, degradation and woe. Alcohol is a poison of intense activity, and kills in large doses rapidly, in smaller doses more gradually, but none the less surely. It produces fatty degenerations of the liver and other organs; cirrhosis, diseases of the brain, apoplexy, delirium tremens, epilepsy, insanity, fatuity; diseases of the lungs, heart, and arteries; of the stomach and bowels; kidneys and skin; gout and rheumatism; dropsies, palsies, scrofula, premature decay, to which black

list of incurable penalties, we might add *suicide* and *murder*, when we should only have a tithe of the miseries and sufferings more or less directly caused by alcoholic drinks.

And what is most to be deplored, the innocent must suffer for the guilty, that is, the diseases so induced do not terminate with the lives of the immediate sufferers, for most unhappily the morbid germs or *materies morbi* are transmitted to their offspring in all their potency and virulence. The children of inebriates are apt to be stunted in body and mind, fatuous and idiotic, and strongly inclined to drink in their turn; scrofulous, rheumatic, consumptive, anemic and squalid, inheriting all the infirmities and morbid tendencies of the parents, so that the "iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation."

Therefore, "let men be instructed in its uses, powers, and properties, let them remember that it has vast power as a poison, and that its use as a drink is to be dreaded and avoided by all who desire to live virtuously, happily, and respectably; it has great power as a medicine in small doses and skilfully employed; much power as a luxury, but of a most perilous kind; no power as food or power to sustain life under severe bodily and mental labor; no power to protect and preserve life against extremes of heat* or cold;† great power in producing, but no power to avert disease; no power to prolong, but great power to shorten life, debase, corrupt and vitiate both mind and morals."

It is estimated on good authority that the vice of intemperance has cost the United States \$1,200,000,000 in ten years, besides filling our almshouses and prisons, and destroying many thousands of lives, directly or indirectly by its agency, and now costs this State at least \$40,000,000 every year.

The appetite for narcotics, whether acquired or derived by inheritance from parents, appears to be deeply rooted in the human constitution, and pervades the larger portion of mankind, as if to

* Dr. Livingstone informs us that consumption, scrofula and stone are quite unknown in Central Africa, attributed to the absence of alcoholics.

† A truth fully confirmed by the evidence of Captain Back, of the Royal Navy, during his voyage to the Polar Seas in 1836-7, when he found those men who abstained from the use of spirituous liquors, possessed the greatest powers of endurance and suffered less injury from exhaustion, fatigue, scarcity of food and exposure to intense cold.

supply some universal, instinctive want. We may fail to convince some of our younger friends, and even those more advanced in the use of the *weed*, of the stupendous evils attendant on the practice, and although the most impressive, earnest and convincing evidence of its poisonous effects has been adduced by eloquent speakers and authors without number, for the information of the public, they have failed to profit by it, as millions of pounds are annually consumed, and the evil practice appears to be rapidly on the increase both in America and Europe.

Tobacco, although a deadly narcotic poison, we are aware, is not without its admirers, and its use has been warmly advocated, on the delusive ground that chewing preserves the teeth; that it relieves and even cures pyrosis; lessens obesity; and that smoking acts as a certain preventive of laryngitis in clergymen, etc. Its advocates allege that it is only an evil when used in excess; that its use should be regulated by the habits, occupation, and general health of each individual, and that when used in moderation, and at limited and prescribed intervals, it can do no harm. Dr. Kane (the Arctic Explorer) has declared that the use of tobacco enabled his men to keep up their courage and spirits under their dreadful sufferings and privations. It is also reported to have been instrumental in saving valuable lives in cases of shipwreck and starvation. And further, it is said that our forefathers used it during some forty or fifty years of their lives, and sustained no inconvenience or apparent injury from it. This may be partly true, but the mass of evidence in favor of its pernicious and hurtful tendencies is so overwhelming, that we are compelled to yield an unreserved acquiescence to the convictions of truth, and to regard it as highly prejudicial to health and morals.

It is related of Sir Walter Raleigh, that on a certain occasion, when in the presence of her courtiers, Queen Elizabeth demanded of him, what pleasure he could possibly derive from inhaling tobacco smoke, he facetiously replied "that it was a specific against the misfortunes of life; it soothes the philosopher in his dreams, and the poet in his meditations. It assuageth all pangs except one," he added, with a deep-drawn sigh. "And what may that be?" demanded the Queen. "The pangs of hopeless love, madam."

It is of the nature of an instinctive craving which, like the taste for tea and coffee, has led to the employment of various substances

in different parts of the world capable of producing a narcotic influence, and of satisfying this morbid, artificial, imaginary want.

The hop employed in England for the purpose of imparting its peculiar bitter, narcotic principle to malt liquors, for which that country is famous, is stated to consume annually forty millions of pounds of this article.

Tobacco, the next favorite narcotic in the United Kingdom, is consumed to the extent of thirty millions of pounds in a year, independent of the vast amount smuggled into the country.

To exhibit at a glance, the several narcotics in most common use by the different nations and races of mankind, it is stated on reliable data that

4480 millions of lbs. of Tobacco are used by 800 millions of people.

20	"	"	of Opium	"	400	"	"	
500	"	"	of Betel Nut	"	100	"	"	(Asiatic Nations.)
80	"	"	of Hops	"	60	"	"	
30	"	"	of Cocoa-leaf	"	10	"	"	(South Americans.)

And the Indian Hemp is largely consumed by 2 to 300 millions of Asiatics.

The income to the French government, from tobacco for the last year, nearly one-half of which was from the United States and Cuba, reached the enormous sum of \$36,000,000.

In 1850, it was estimated the annual cost of *distilled spirits*, *beer* and *tobacco*, consumed by the people of Great Britain, was fifty-seven millions of pounds sterling; a sum equal to the whole public revenue; among the laboring classes, about one-third of the family's earnings is applied to the purchase of narcotic indulgencies.

The consumption of these narcotic poisons in our own country is alarmingly on the increase, and must deeply affect the physical constitution and intellectual character of the masses addicted to their use.

It is a question which interests equally the physiologist, the philanthropist, and the statesman, to determine how far the actual phases of disease, the tastes, the habits, and the character of modern nations have been modified, or perhaps remodelled, by the prolonged consumption of these narcotics; and what influence their continued use will probably exercise on the final destinies of the world.

When narcotics are indulged in to excess, they inflame the passions, excite, impair, and morbidly derange the mental functions, and by paralyzing the nervous centres, deprive their victims of courage and the powers of procreation, rendering him timid, irre-

solute and imbecile, inducing a state of premature senility with his brain, stomach, liver, and kidneys, nearly defunct; he perishes, alas! the forsaken, reviled spectre of erring humanity—although originally “created in the image of God, and made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honor.”

Dating the origin of our science from the remote period of antiquity, no one will be found to deny its necessity and utility; that it is as natural to seek relief from pain as to suffer, and however skeptical one may affect to be while in the enjoyment of full health and buoyant spirits; upon the urgent seizure of pain and sickness, he is compelled, however reluctantly, to abandon his skepticism and call in medical aid. Additional evidence of its necessity might be drawn from the instincts of animals, and the customs of savage nations, which impel them to seek relief by a resort to various curative expedients; while many useful lessons may be learned by studying the spontaneous indications and the varied processes of cure employed by nature. The low estimate entertained of medical talent and qualification has done much to degrade it in the eyes of the world, has given character to empiricism, and served to bring the utility of the science into serious question.

How often has it been boldly asserted that there is no intellect too feeble, no talents too humble but what may engage in the study of medicine, and when a young man fails in or is disqualified for other pursuits, he may embark in this, with the fairest prospects and the brightest hopes. But how often do we see such ventures end in disappointment and disgrace; indeed we are safe in declaring that in order to master its intricacies and arrive at eminence, there is no occupation or profession that demands more strength of mind, a higher degree of cultivation, or more varied talents for its successful prosecution.

The importance and even necessity of a liberal and classical education as preliminary to the study of medicine must be generally conceded; as the mental faculties will be thus expanded and invigorated, the imagination and moral sentiments properly trained and disciplined, while the character by careful culture and assiduous attention becomes fully formed and developed, will afford the best foundation for rearing a superstructure, and the best presage of its future usefulness and distinction.

Private office instruction has been denounced by a learned pro-

fessor of one of our colleges as worse than useless, as an absolute waste of time, on the part of both pupil and preceptor. From impressions received during our pupilage, we are compelled to take a far different view of this subject, considering it as a GROSS mistake, not to be more explicit. We freely admit that an able, experienced lecturer, who knows how to unite the pleasing with the useful, and can artfully enlist and direct the attention of his pupils, leading them along step by step through the intricate mazes of science to the ultimate objects of their inquiries, can assuredly accomplish much in teaching the elementary principles of the science, and in enforcing such practical truths as may be deemed indispensable for the learner to know. But for a student to depend solely on lectures to the exclusion of all other methods of instruction, private office study, a course of diligent, well selected reading and oral examinations rigidly conducted, would have the effect, we conceive, to render his knowledge superficial, vague and uncertain, and when obtained without any personal exertion or reflection on his part, it would fail to make any permanent impression on the memory; so that the student at the termination of his course will be found to possess an amount of knowledge in proportion to the *labor, time* and *trouble* bestowed in its acquirement. Much injury is done to the cause of true science by promulgating bold assumptions, gross exaggeration and unbounded confidence in the curative powers of medicines; by false reasoning and the hasty adoption of novelties, and by an obstinate adherence to vague theories and speculations founded in opposition to sound practice and just principles; so that much valuable time is consumed by the student in learning what is at best irrelevant, worthless and unprofitable, such as the wild hallucinations and crude fancies of visionary enthusiasts; who often distort and pervert the truth, and fail to secure a good name by over-reaching themselves in their attempts to mould and fashion the truth to suit their own purposes and designs.

Experienced physicians well know that many diseases are incurable, and that others are subject to laws of duration and violence, over which we have no control; yet students, on leaving the lectures of their favorite teachers, are apt to fancy that every ailment that flesh is heir to, must succumb before the powers of medicine, and that no emergency can possibly arise but what may be successfully met and combated.

At the commencement of his career the young physician, however well qualified by previous study, provided he is duly impressed with the importance of his mission and the weight of his responsibilities, must experience more or less embarrassment in conducting the treatment of disease. He must necessarily undergo a severe probation during the first years of practice, acquiring additional skill and confidence as his experience enlarges; but if he would value a fair reputation, a self-approving conscience, and avoid the infliction of irremediable evil on his kind friends who have intrusted their health and lives to his care, he must investigate every source of knowledge, learn to separate truth from error, and be able to rely confidently on the resources of his own genius, guided by a sound discriminating judgment, matured by study, observation and reflection.

In our science we have to regret the absence of fixed principles, established laws and rules which might serve as unerring guides; while surrounded on every hand by difficulties and dangers.

We have, moreover, to treat with an organism of the most delicate structure and intricate mechanism, regulated by laws over which we can exercise but a limited control, and subject to various changes and morbid alterations under the influence of causes operating from within and without; but all requiring to be most carefully studied and investigated.

The accomplished physician renders all nature tributary to his science; he observes the weather and change of season as successively developed in the revolving year; he calculates the effects of temperature and its variations in dryness and humidity; he studies atmospheric changes, and its varied combinations with miasmatic and pestiferous exhalations in causing epidemics. From all which sources he derives valuable aid in supplying materials for the improvement of his art. In the language of a distinguished professor,* "The knowledge, the principles, and the materials thus accumulated are to be reduced to practice. By these, and through these alone, can any man be rendered competent to undertake an art for '*preserving health, prolonging life, and curing disease.*' It is the practical application of medical attainments which forms the constant study of the physician, and which demands so imperiously the

* Dr. Hodge.

enlarged medical genius, without which learning and science are of no avail. In our country the want of this information in the young practitioner, is a subject of just and severe animadversion.

"Furnished with theoretical knowledge, and it may be with the best practical rules, he undertakes the exercise of his profession without having seriously and carefully attended to their clinical application.

"Dr. Rush has observed that just principles are, in a great degree, a substitute for experience. But this does not do away with the great necessity of clinical observation; for however forcibly and eloquently these principles may be imparted and appositely illustrated, unless he has seen them carried out into actual practice, he will not know how, when, or where, to apply them; but will be compelled to grope his way in darkness amidst perplexing doubts and painful anxiety.

"To a conscientious, sensitive mind this will prove a source of constant uneasiness, annoyance, and self-reproach, when he reflects through how much suffering to his patients, he has reached that point, at which he should have started."

We are safe in averring that no class of men have more cheerfully made greater sacrifices of health and comfort, and perilled even life itself in the cause of science, or more freely volunteered their best exertions, their time and their talents in behalf of suffering humanity.

We may justly exclaim with Cicero, "*Homines ad Deos nulla re proprius accident quam salutem hominibus dando.*" Medical missionaries have been sent forth both from Europe and the United States, to travel among the heathen in remote parts of the world, for the double purpose of disseminating the truths of the Gospel and of healing bodily maladies.

It is the physician's peculiar privilege to enter the abodes of sorrow, penury, and disease; to be an eye-witness of the calm and quiet resignation with which his patient, prostrate on the sick and weary couch, contemplates his approaching end. The good physician having experienced the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and his spirit clothed with the mantle of peace, is enabled to impart its joyful and benign influences to the aching heart, and to pour out comfort and consolation in visions of unmingled bliss. He is also summoned, in the exercise of his art, to attend at the bedside

of the rich, the wise, and the great; who when the last sad hour of change and trial arrives, are prepared, through the visitation of Divine Grace, to admit the emptiness and vanity of all worldly grandeur, honors, and enjoyments, and to confess their utter insufficiency to afford true peace and consolation at the closing scene.

How frequently has our profession been assailed with the charge of infidelity and skepticism, and we have sometimes feared not without some show of reason and plausibility. We feel disposed to repel this sweeping imputation as unfounded, as it is unjust.

One of the most convincing proofs of the divine origin of man is derived from the study of the structure and functions of the living body; the nice adaption and mutual dependence of its several parts; the beauty and harmony observed in its varied relations and systems; the wisdom and perfection of its design—must naturally impress the mind with a sense of wonder and delight, elevating it to the most sublime conceptions of the Deity. Indeed, our earthly tabernacle bears the impress of the divine hand, and the more closely and minutely it is studied, the deeper will be the conviction that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

When we contemplate too the wisdom of the Deity, as displayed in the beauty and grandeur of the heavens; the stupendous and sublime arrangement of the planetary system; of the countless worlds and systems swung in boundless space; each planet in its appointed orbit, revolving about fixed centres with undeviating precision; the fixed stars regarded as so many suns, giving light and heat to other worlds, and like our own surrounded by planetary systems extending to such an infinitude of space, that whereas, the light which emanates from our sun, at a distance of ninety-five millions of miles, reaches us in eight minutes; the light from some of these distant luminaries (it is computed) would require hundreds and even thousands of years in reaching this earth.

Such contemplations are useful and instructive; they fill the mind with a holy fear and reverence for the inimitable works of the Creator, inspire it with an approximative idea of the vast powers, the inscrutable wisdom, and the infinite beneficence of that Almighty Being who called them into existence, who said “Let there be light and there was light,” “who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings

of the wind ; who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever."

The profound study of, and familiar acquaintance with the natural sciences irresistibly lead the heart of man to the worship and adoration of the great First Cause ; and by their practical teachings and monitions, incite to humility and abasedness—chasten and purify his thoughts, and enlighten his understanding.

As medical men are the legitimate cultivators and expounders of the science of human nature, and from their position in society compelled to study man in his varied relations and phases ; we should not feel surprised, when called upon to testify before courts of Justice, to find the physician arrayed on the side of mercy, seemingly at the expense of justice, and arriving at conclusions not always in keeping with popular sentiment ; through his efforts to screen the guilty and erring, by interposing the plea of insanity on physical grounds.

How often can the various forms of insanity, examples of violation of the moral law, and even the commission of capital crime, be traced to some abnormal condition of the cerebral, gastric, or ganglionic systems ; and hence the necessity of invoking the aid of medical science in the management and treatment of the insane, as well as in the punishment and reformation of criminals.

The physician should not fail to acquaint himself with the principles of public hygiene and their practical application, more especially as such knowledge has a direct and important bearing on the health and lives of his fellow-citizens ; the profession, as a scientific body, and as the acknowledged guardians of the public health, should, on the appearance of a pestilential epidemic, be prepared to face danger, and be ever ready to instruct and enlighten the public mind on the most approved measures for mitigating its violence and lessening the mortality, and by judicious and well directed efforts endeavor to calm excitement from the apprehension of impending evil.

How deeply affecting to a sensitive, benevolent mind, to witness the devastating ravages of a wide spreading pestilence, and to feel one's self utterly powerless to arrest its march of destruction, while he is compelled to witness the nearest and dearest ties of kindred and affection dissolved, the hearts of widows and orphans made

desolate and sad, and they thrown upon a cold, unfeeling world, bereaved of their earthly protector and friend.

The relief of the sick poor has always been a prominent object with the conscientious, humane physician, who, actuated by motives of benevolence, is ever ready to respond to their calls. Kindness and gentleness will ever mark the performance of these duties.

The poor man languishing on the bed of sickness, disheartened and deprived of all resources, has strong claims on our sympathies, and the medical officers of public and private charities should never undervalue his time, nor disregard his sufferings, by a neglect of duty, or by a want of punctuality in their visits.

During his intercourse with the sick, the physician is often brought into close proximity with scenes of mental anguish, distress, and deep suffering, arising from vicious conduct or the indulgence of evil propensities, and when appealed to by the sufferer in a confiding tone for advice and counsel, he should not turn a deaf ear, but earnestly embrace the occasion for promoting and strengthening the good resolutions of his patients. Advice thus seasonably and kindly proffered will "like bread cast upon the waters, be found after many days," and often prove effectual in reforming the misguided wanderer, and in restoring him to the paths of rectitude and virtue. Our object should be invariably, to make men *wiser, happier, and better*.

The duties of the physician to his professional brethren have been so ably pointed out elsewhere, that little remains to be added. A wide difference certainly exists between offences against morals and offences against etiquette, or the rules of decorum. Angry feelings, jealousies, and bickerings are at times engendered by trivial errors of this nature. In the fierce contests kindled by a spirit of rivalry and opposition, an effort is made to dispossess a brother practitioner of the good opinion and confidence he has toiled to earn; and with the object still farther to injure his adversary and to sustain a bad cause, various acts of selfishness and duplicity are resorted to; he magnifies his own merits, and rarely fails to disparage and undervalue those of his rival; such a course of procedure is highly unprofessional, and should receive our unqualified displeasure.

That divine law, "Do unto others as ye would that men should do unto you," forms the basis of all sound ethics, and should be held

in constant remembrance and be practised on all occasions. Much will be gained by cultivating a kind, courteous, affable demeanor throughout our varied intercourse, and even under the most trying and adverse circumstances, strive to maintain a quiet, calm self-possession, devoid of all irritability and petulance.

Let us ever cherish most assiduously "that love which is forbearing, obliging, not envious, arrogant or proud, not rude or selfish, irritable or defamatory. It has pleasure in truth but not in falsehood. It is content with all, confides in all, trusts to all, bears with all. The highest rank, the greatest skill, the most exalted merit, the profoundest erudition, are without this, nothing; the highest achievements and attainments in literature and science without it are vain as the tinkling cymbal.

In what light can the well-educated and those of high moral standing regard a profession, the members of which mutually disparage each other? The only rational inference is, that the discoverer of motes in a brother's eye will be suspected of having a beam in his own, and a low estimate will be entertained of all.

We should rejoice to see medical ethics assume that position which its merits and importance entitle it to; and we do not hesitate to offer the sentiment, that it should be taught in our medical schools.

Religion and science, twin sisters by nature, should be inseparable. What true dignity and greatness the one confers on the other, and if a teacher sufficiently wise and great and good were to undertake to labor in this field, he could not fail to reap a rich reward.

Professional intolerance not unfrequently displays itself on the appearance of any trivial departure from conventional practices; thus physicians in full practice are apt to regard with a jealous eye a younger brother who, feeling the *res angustæ domi* ventures on the exercise of any surgical talent he may chance to possess, when he is at once hooted down as an interloper. By some practitioners it is considered degrading to bleed their patients, and as a positive infringement of a conventional rule, he must virtually suffer his patient to die, rather than degrade the dignity of his calling by descending to the menial office of phlebotomy! Such conduct we can only regard as reprehensible, if not criminally delinquent.

Permit me, gentlemen, to entreat you to cultivate most assidu-

ously the high, the holy and ennobling principles of the Christian religion, which will tend to secure a more perfect and permanent organization of the profession, and conduce to unite and cement us as a band of brothers, by diffusing a steady glow of friendly feeling, cordiality and good fellowship; we shall be much better qualified to repress and subdue the selfish instincts of our nature by a more enlarged philanthropy, and by training and disciplining the mind to scientific pursuits—we shall be enabled to extend and perfect the resources of our art.

We would gladly embrace the present occasion of offering a few remarks on that system of medicine founded on the *vis medicatrix naturæ*; first premising our entire disbelief in the existence of any intelligent principle as associated with this power. Its bearing at once on the *nonentities* of homœopathy and the too strong realities of *heroic medication* must be sufficiently apparent.

In this age of discovery and improvement, of change and innovation, of degeneracy and empiricism, it becomes the sincere, honest inquirer after truth to examine seriously for himself every practical system that may exert an important bearing on human life and happiness, and on the future progress of the healing art.

Many well attested cases of cure effected solely by mental influence through the aid of bread pills or powdered biscuit might be cited—going to establish an important truth which should be generally known, at this day when the homœopath is taxing his ingenuity in showing to the world how beautifully his infinitesimals act and react upon disease, when it is apparent that nature alone is often adequate to the cure.

It is far from a *do-nothing*, *negative* system of treatment, relying exclusively upon the efforts of nature, which may have a most disastrous result where active and positive measures are indicated, that we would advocate; while we openly disclaim all affiliation with the purely *expectant method*, as well as an active heroic treatment carried to excess, by damaging the system and fatally exhausting its recuperative energies.

The physician should not be the *magister* but the *minister naturæ*, the delegated guardian, the ministering angel in the hands of Providence to watch over and regulate her movements—while by the skilful interposition of his art he enables nature to triumph over obstacles to the recovery of his patient. Hand in hand we should

co-operate with her in the performance of the mighty work; never forgetting that it is she who acts—imitating and respecting her; frustrating and disturbing her never.

In the reunion of fractured bones, the healing of wounds and contusions, and in repairing various other injuries and losses under the direction of the skilful surgeon, we have a familiar illustration of the resources of nature; and who of us that is not familiar with the removal of vertigo, the confused vision and cerebral disturbance of an impending apoplexy in consequence of an hæmorrhoidal discharge, and a violent headache suddenly relieved by an epistaxis.

It is to imperfect, hasty observation, we are indebted for a host of false medical facts, erroneous deductions, and much of the uncertainty in medicine. It is by attaching too much importance to what art can do, and awarding too little to nature, that we have erred. At the present day we are compelled to admit the fact, though humiliating to our self-complacency, that the powers of medicine are often overrated; giving rise to an arrogant self-sufficiency and a perpetual, busy interference of art.

A *rational* or *natural* system of treatment does not by any means exclude activity of practice, when it is clearly indicated. All that it provides against, is the abuse of active interference, as when the nervous system has received a violent shock, and the vital power is prostrate from the effects of an injury; under these circumstances, if the patient be profusely bled, reaction may never occur and death as an inevitable consequence, ensue.

It is, perhaps, in acute visceral inflammations that heroic treatment has been most indiscriminately used, and, although modified and improved of late, it is a question whether the activity of our interference might not be still farther reduced. Even in pneumonia, where very active treatment was once deemed indispensable, we now find not only that a fair proportion of cures takes place under homœopathic treatment according to Dr. Balfour, but that the regular Skoda “considers the great advantage of not bleeding to be the speedy recovery.” In like manner, Dr. Marshall Hall, who visited the Parisian hospitals, honestly confesses “that when the treatment of pleurisy consists mainly in the application of cataplasms, a post-mortem examination is rarely obtained, so generally do the patients recover.”

This apparent discrepancy and antagonism to the practice usually

pursued in this country, may be satisfactorily explained on the ground of a difference in climate, in physical stamina, habits, and constitution of the people.

Viewing the state of the profession as presented in this once favored land, one cannot resist the conviction that the gold, "the fine gold has become greatly dimmed," that its respectability, dignity, and elevated rank appear to be lost in the chaos of surrounding elements that enter into and form a component part of the prevailing principles and practices of the day. Hence, the most flagrant and unprincipled charlatanry is publicly practised and countenanced; so that the upright and conscientious aspirant to public favor, who amidst doubts and uncertainties, and the clash of opposing interests, has embarked on the ocean of professional life, finds much to discourage and dishearten, much to embarrass and confound.

The various modern sects which modern times have originated, have by tricks at *jugglery* and *mysticism*, prevailed over the credulity and good sense of a large portion of society, and have succeeded for a time in acquiring a notoriety for themselves, and in securing a patronage more extended and brilliant in its career than any therapeutic scheme hitherto devised.

The invasion of established rights, and the collision of interests, have very naturally kindled a vindictive spirit in the minds of many attached to our walks, and regardless of what truth there might be in the system, they have poured forth torrents of ridicule, invective and abuse. Is not the estimate in which the homœopath and hydropath are held by the public, greatly promoted by such violent denunciation? Are they not regarded by their followers as the victims of an unjust persecution? Martyrs (as they contend) for the cause of science and humanity. And farther, do they not secure a triumph over the regular profession by compelling their votaries to adopt its principles, true or false, without inquiry? And the public, blindly wedded to their crude absurdities, feels bound to sanction and defend their system under the influence of wild fanaticism, pious ignorance, or base sophistry.

We are opposed to all exclusive dogmas, but we are ready to appropriate and transfer into regular practice therapeutic and hygienic measures, derived from what source they may; provided, they add to our available means, and multiply the chances of human life.

We have long been convinced of the value and efficacy of cold water applied to the surface of the body as a remedial agent, more especially in typhoid fevers, and local inflammations; and we would earnestly call upon the legitimate members of the profession to rescue its use from the hands of ignorant pretenders, and apply it to the treatment of disease on scientific principles, and in accordance with rational experience.

Finally, Gentlemen,* "Have we as practitioners of the healing art, labored assiduously to qualify ourselves by study, observation, and research, and do we continue unremittingly to avail ourselves of every means within our reach to extend and perfect the resources of our art?

"Are we faithful in the discharge of our duties to the sick, devoting all that time, attention, and exercise of thought which the case requires; denying ourselves the gratifications of sense and pleasure, and considering always that we have assumed a highly responsible trust, for the neglect of which we are accountable, not only to our own conscience, and to public opinion, but to a much higher tribunal, the judgment of which is unerring and its sentence irrevocable?

"While exercising the utmost skill in every case committed to our charge, do we observe an uniform, kind deportment, bearing with the infirmities and caprices of the sick, and when we fail in our efforts to cure, do we endeavor to alleviate their sorrows and griefs; to lessen by every consolation in our power, the terrible blow that inevitably ensues?

"Do we observe inviolably those sentiments of honor and fidelity, which in the familiar and confidential intercourse with those who require our services, may prove our only safeguard against temptations often too powerful to be resisted by an unbalanced or perverted mind?

"In our intercourse with each other, do we avoid those petty jealousies, disgraceful altercations, and vile intrigues, which though incidental to our frequently conflicting interests, can have no other tendency than to lower the tone of our moral feeling and degrade us in the estimation of all; on the contrary, are we solicitous to cultivate in ourselves a kindly feeling towards our professional

* Prof. Geo. B. Wood.

brethren, and by acts of courtesy and friendship, to inspire them with reciprocal dispositions; and still further do we endeavor to promote to the extent of our influence, that union of sentiment and harmony of action, which are essential to the prosperity, usefulness, and elevated standing of the body?"

In this great work of reformation, let us enlist our best energies and labor unceasingly to subdue pride of opinion, arrogance, selfishness, and vain glory; first endeavoring so to regulate our own thoughts and conduct as to impart to the profession a character derived solely from individual worth and excellence; we shall then be enabled to exercise greater influence among our associates in establishing good fellowship and virtuous principles.

Fixing our eye steadily on the source and fountain of infinite purity and holiness, let us implore the divine guidance and direction, considering always our many imperfections and short comings; our profession then might stand forth, redeemed and purified and arrayed in all her glory and brightness, diffusing blessings on every hand; an object deserving the gratitude and veneration of the world.